



ITVS ANNOUNCES PRODUCTION OF AMERICAN GRADUATE LATINO PROGRAMMING TO ADDRESS LATINO HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT CRISIS

ITVS-Funded Programs Enhance American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen, a Public Media Initiative to Address the National Dropout Crisis

--Acclaimed filmmaker Bernardo Ruiz to produce, direct--

[San Francisco, CA May 1, 2012] — Nationwide, Latino students face an increased risk of dropping out of school. Forty-one percent of Latinos ages 20 and older do not have a high school diploma, compared to 23 percent of blacks and 14 percent of whites. To address the growing high school dropout crisis among Latinos, the largest and youngest minority group in the U.S., Independent Television Service (**ITVS**) – the leading funder of U.S. independent public television productions – is launching American Graduate Latino as part of the national public media initiative, [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (**CPB**).

Launching in November 2012 with a series of shorts, American Graduate Latino will provide the core American Graduate initiative with broadcasts and online programming in both Spanish and English to engage viewers, teachers, and community leaders in identifying and implementing solutions to the high school dropout crisis.

“Every year, one million of our nation’s young people make the life-altering decision to drop out of school resulting in severe consequences for their future and our country,” said Patricia Harrison, president and CEO of CPB. “Through the American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen initiative, America’s public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – are engaging local non-profit partners, business leaders, parents, and teachers to help young people stay on the path to a high school diploma.”

ITVS joins other public media producers and more than 65 public radio and television stations around the country that are working to bring together parents, teachers, business leaders, and community organizations to highlight the issue and create solutions to the dropout crisis.

“Public broadcasting’s commitment to telling complex, in-depth stories is more essential to our democracy than ever,” said Sally Jo Fifer, ITVS president and CEO. “Through American Graduate Latino, CPB, ITVS, and independent producers have come together to help unravel a problem deeply affecting the Latino community – and the future of America.”

At the heart of American Graduate Latino are two documentaries executive produced by award-winning director Bernardo Ruiz (*American Experience: Roberto Clemente*) slated to air in 2013 on the award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. The documentaries, produced in association with Latino Public Broadcasting, explore why Latino students are dropping out in such large numbers, tell the stories behind the statistics, and grant viewers unique, first-hand access into the lives of students, teachers, and education reformers. Created by a fully bilingual team, the documentaries will be produced and distributed both in English and Spanish.

“We are extremely pleased to be working with ITVS on this critical issue and hope that the documentaries will build awareness and encourage educators, parents, and community leaders to explore innovative solutions to engage young children in education at an early age, and empower them with the knowledge that will allow them to succeed,” said Sandie Viquez Pedlow, executive director of Latino Public Broadcasting.

“My team and I are very excited to be a part of this innovative public media initiative,” said Ruiz. “The educational outcomes of Latino students matter, not just to the Latino community but to the country as a whole. Our two programs, each with a Spanish-language version, will examine in an honest way what prevents many Latino students from graduating and what can be done to create successful educational outcomes for Latino students.”

American Graduate Latino will also feature five short-form documentary films executive produced by ITVS to target Latino audiences through multiplatform distribution including broadcast on PBS, V-Me, and commercial cable outlets and digital platforms like YouTube, SnagFilms, jaman, and pictv in both English and Spanish. The shorts, made by a select group of veteran and emerging filmmakers – including Betty Bastidas, Madeleine Bair, Xochitl Dorsey, Heather Ross, Jim Mendiola, Raymond Telles, and Angela Reginato) – will highlight the dropout crisis, focusing on risk factors and innovative solutions through the lens of Latino youth.

About American Graduate

The public media initiative, [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), is helping communities across America identify and implement solutions to address the high school dropout crisis. Made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the multi-year campaign is designed to raise awareness and dialogue through national and local multiplatform programming.

Targeting communities with highest dropout rates, the initiative also increases local engagement and action through collaborations and partnerships, and increases student engagement through teacher professional development and classroom curricula. Public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – reach 99 percent of the country over the air, have built models for successful intervention in early learning, and have deep connections in the communities they

serve. More than 600 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate and CPB is partnering with America's Promise Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Visit American Graduate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [AmericanGraduate.org](#).

About CPB

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,300 locally-owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television, and related online services.

About ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents and promotes award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Thursday nights at 10 PM on PBS. Mandated by Congress in 1988 and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS has brought more than 1,000 independently produced programs to date to American audiences. For more information about ITVS, visit [itvs.org](#).

About Latino Public Broadcasting

Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB) is the leader of the development, production, acquisition and distribution of public media content that is representative of Latino people, or addresses issues of interest to Latino Americans. These programs, including the series *Voces*, are produced for dissemination to the public broadcasting system. Edward James Olmos is founder and Chairman of the LPB Board of Directors. Sandie Viquez Pedlow is Executive Director. For more information please visit [www.lpbp.org](#).

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